

Failure to adapt

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Summary

While changes always have been a part of life, nowadays the rate of changes is speeding up. As a result, workplaces require almost continuous adaptation by employees. The aim of this dissertation is to explore the factors which influence adaptation to job dissatisfaction and labor market behavior. On the basis of this aim, three objectives have been formulated: 1) to expand our understanding of how and why employees might fail to adapt to job dissatisfaction; 2) to explore the role of personality in labor market behavior and in adaptation in case of job dissatisfaction; 3) to understand the problems of a group of people with difficulties to adapt to a foreign culture.

Chapter 1 provides a general introduction to the dissertation. It outlines the scope of the study, aims and objectives, and goes through the basic theories related to adaptation. The focus is on employees' adaptation to changes related to employment at different levels: failure to adapt on organizational (Chapter 2, 3, 4); country (Chapter 5) and trans-cultural level (Chapter 6).

At the organizational level, this dissertation focuses on employees' responses to job dissatisfaction as an antecedent of adaptation at the work place, as well as on the importance of personality in the adaptation process and labor market behavior. In **Chapter 2**, we develop a new perspective on job lock which helps us to deepen our understanding of why some employees are job locked/stuck at work even though continuously dissatisfied. We classify a set of factors which explain why some employees fail to adapt to job dissatisfaction into: employee's personal characteristics (socio-demographic features, personality attributes) and work-related factors (employment conditions, work-related contextual features). Further, we foresee that variation may exist between different occupations in different sectors with regard to how employees deal with job dissatisfaction. For this reason, occupation and sector have been included as an additional set of factors. We use the British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) which is an annual longitudinal survey. Data for the period from 1991 to 1996 with

14,341 individuals is included in the analysis. We test the effect of the above mentioned factors (explanatory variables) on each of the dependent variables: job dissatisfaction, job immobility and job lock by making use of a binary probit regression. In order to correct for the non-randomly selected sample, we perform a Heckman type two-step procedure.

In total, 6.6% of the employees in our study are in job lock. From all socio-demographic features included in our analysis, age appears to be a significant determinant of the absence of job turnover and being in job lock (both when we consider all employees and when we consider only those dissatisfied with their job). Gender and health status appear to be significant determinants of job dissatisfaction and being in job lock (when we consider all employees). Being male significantly increases the chance of being dissatisfied and being in a job lock (when we take into account all employees).

Self-esteem (specifically, minimum peak-end self-esteem) is used in our analysis to represent the personality attributes that might contribute to falling in a state of job lock. The results show that self-esteem has an effect on job immobility, currently experienced job dissatisfaction and job lock. Type of occupation appears significant for job dissatisfaction and being in job lock (when we take into account all employees). Specifically employees working as managers and administrators, administrative professionals, personal and protective occupations are less likely to be dissatisfied with their job and in a job lock. Having a fulltime job, employment pension scheme and promotion opportunities are significant for the state of job dissatisfaction and being in job lock (when we consider all employees). The type of sector proves to be a strong predictor for the states of being dissatisfied and being in job lock when we take into account all employees. Employees in the non-profit sector are less likely to be dissatisfied and are less likely to be in job lock than in other sectors. The regional unemployment rate is insignificant for being job dissatisfied, job immobile and in job lock. Further, tenure appears to be a significant predictor for job turnover and being in job lock.

Thus, both employee's personal characteristics as well as on-work and off-work related factors are related to job lock.

In **Chapter 3**, using the two factor structure of job lock (job dissatisfaction and job immobility) developed in Chapter 1, we built a transitional model. We are interested why some employees exit job lock and others stay stuck. Further, for those who quit job lock, we are interested to know how this happens – by becoming satisfied, by using mobility, or a combination of both. We use the combination of factors which proved to be influential for job lock (Chapter 1 and Chapter 2). We include an additional factor, decisional procrastination (avoidance behavior), which is seen as a consequence of pre-existing personality characteristics. The parameters of the two transition models (transition to and from a job lock state) are estimated by multinomial logistic regression. The explanatory variables are kept the same across the models in order to be able to compare the results. Binary regression is performed to compare those in job lock and those who are job dissatisfied but mobile in at least one of the years. Data from the BHPS are used. In total, 2,949 employees reporting job dissatisfaction for two subsequent years are included in the analysis. From them, 1,344 employees experience job lock and 1,605 are mobile during at least one of the years. Among those dissatisfied with their job for two subsequent years, job lock is more often observed among elderly, married, men, and those with poor health, as well as among those in a craft occupation, working fulltime, with an employer-provided pension scheme and without promotion opportunities. Overall, job lock is less often observed among those with a managerial occupation. We do not find significant differences between the two groups (those in job lock and those who are job dissatisfied but mobile in at least one of the years) with regard to the personality characteristics included in the analysis (peak-ends self-esteem and procrastination), as well as with regard to contextual factors (i.e. regional unemployment rate).

Summary

As much as 61.4% of those who experience job lock were dissatisfied and immobile during the preceding year (thus, they experience prolonged job lock). The other employees, who enter the job-lock state, were most often satisfied and immobile in the preceding year (26.1%). From those who are in job lock, 44.1% remains dissatisfied and immobile in the following year. Those who exit from the job lock state, most often move to the 'satisfied and immobile' state (32.4%) or 'satisfied and mobile' state (14.1%). The results imply that being older, married, with low peak-end self-esteem, working in a craft occupation, in the governmental sector, and a high regional unemployment rate are push factors to a long term job lock state. Further, age, low peak-self-esteem, and a high regional unemployed rate push employee into job lock and describe the failure to exit job lock and to enter long-term job lock. Some occupations (a managerial or administrator position, associate professional, personal and protective service), private sector and promotion opportunities are the factors that pull the employee from the job lock state. Employees in a manager and administrator occupation, those in personal and protective service occupations, with promotion opportunities, working in the private sector use much more often mobility as a coping strategy in order to adjust to job dissatisfaction. At the same time, manager and administrator occupation, associate professionals, personal and protective service occupations, sales, working in the private sector, and with promotion opportunities employ work adjustments as coping strategy (satisfied and immobile).

Peak-end low self-esteem, mental health problems and decisional procrastination show significant effects on the probability to stay in long-term job lock. Low self-esteem and mental health problems have a joint effect on the transition from a job lock state (shown by the significance of the interaction term). Employees who procrastinate to make decisions and report mental health problems are less likely to be 'satisfied and mobile' compared to 'dissatisfied and immobile' and become stuck at their job in the long term (i.e. to experience

job lock). While, decisional procrastination is shown to be preventing employees to enter a job lock state, procrastination proves to be much more related to job satisfaction. Further, when the regional unemployment rate is high, employees with low self-esteem have less chance to experience job dissatisfaction. So, almost the same variables determine if the employee would successfully adapt independently of the adaptive strategy used.

In **Chapter 4**, we combine the concept of job lock (as developed in Chapter 1) with this of job embeddedness. Job embeddedness is a broad range of on-work (organizational) as well as off-work (community) factors which influence employees to stay within the organization. These factors are divided into: 1) links: attachments to the job and the community; 2) fit: the extent to which an employee perceives he/she matches the job, organization, and community; 3) sacrifice: how much an employee perceives he/she needs to give up if he/she leaves the job. For long, job embeddedness has been seen just as a positive phenomenon. Though, the scientists begin to recognize that it can have a negative side, as those employees who feel stuck in a dissatisfying job may lose motivation, experience increased frustration, decrease performance, and exhibit counterproductive behavior. The role of individual differences for job lock is highlighted in Chapter 2 and 3. The knowledge about how individual differences may play a role for job embeddedness is scarce. In Chapter 4, we relate jointly self-concepts (global self-esteem, contingent self-esteem, self-determination, and self-compassion) to job embeddedness. The three emotional regulation systems of Depue and his colleagues (Depue & Morrone-Strupinsky, 2005) are used and related to compassion mind theory (Gilbert, 2009a). We hypothesize that when the different aspects of self are self-critical (low global self-esteem, high contingent self-esteem, low self-determination) and self-compassion is low, the employee will be less embedded and/or will show the ‘negative’ side of embeddedness, be stuck. Though when self-compassion is high, this will less be the case. Cross-sectional data are used from the employees in the Netherlands. In total, 113 participants filled in the

questionnaire completely and are included in our analyses. In order to test the hypotheses simultaneously, we used structural equation modelling, in particular path analysis (AMOS 22.0). We demonstrated that the self-aspects relate to both on-work and off-work job embeddedness. While self-determination influence directly job embeddedness components while self-compassion effects job embeddedness via its effect on the self-aspects.

The model that shows best fit to the data is the one which combines both self-compassion and self-determination in it. This study shows the importance of self-compassion and the self for the organizational life and employee wellbeing.

In **Chapter 5**, we study adaptation on a country level. We examine whether people with low self-esteem are more likely to become unemployed than those with self-worth. There is enough scientific proof that men and women differ in their level of self-esteem, with women having in general lower self-esteem than men. Further, unemployment is more prevalent among women. Therefore, we specifically look at the role of gender, expecting gender to moderate the effect of low self-esteem on becoming unemployed.

The top-down model of self-esteem (trait self-esteem influences self-evaluations and state self-esteem) is used in this study. We hypothesize that: 1) people with low self-worth are more likely to become unemployed than those with high self-worth; 2) gender exacerbates the effect of low self-worth on becoming unemployed.

From the BHPS we use the first eleven waves (1991-2001) with 51,154 observations in total. In this sample, 7,158 persons became unemployed during the 11-year period, and 7% of the women and 4% of the men reported low self-esteem. We use discrete-time event history analysis, which is a technique for the investigation of causal relationships (Granger causality) in a time-related empirical representation of the structure of the causal arguments, to test the hypotheses. The results confirm our hypothesis that low self-esteem is highly significant in predicting future unemployment for women but not for men. Low self-esteem has an effect on

the chance of becoming unemployed for married women and those in a partnership but not for men. Male employees who experience health problems related to alcohol and drug use, have a higher chance to become unemployed. Irrespective of gender, low self-esteem has an effect on the chance of becoming unemployed for some occupations. People in associate and professional occupations with low self-esteem have a higher chance to become unemployed. In advance, a higher regional unemployment rate increases the probability that employees of either gender will become unemployed. Also, a higher education and union participation prevent the employee from becoming unemployed irrespective of gender.

Having in mind that migration will be a perpetual part of Europe's future and that every aspect of the adaptation process can be influenced by culture, in **Chapter 6**, we concentrate on trans-cultural adaptation. Particularly, we attempt to bring understanding to trans-cultural adaptation of a group of immigrants and develop a therapeutic approach for them. Cross-cultural adaptation has been a research focus of many academics, who in their attempt to understand this phenomenon, built models. Though, in the practice of counseling and psychotherapy, those models have only a limited appliance. Furthermore, the psychotherapy approaches are to a great extent, a product of the Western culture which led to a need for a revision and adaptation of the western psychotherapy approaches.

Data for this study are collected from two private psychotherapy practices of two independently working professionals (both Bulgarian by origin) in the Netherlands and Bulgaria. The psychotherapy took place during 2009-2010. Three groups of immigrants are formed, based on the reasons why people migrate: work, contact and future. Qualitative analysis is used to highlight the problematic aspects of these groups. Positive Psychotherapy, as an interdisciplinary approach, is applied. Positive Psychotherapy is a trans-cultural framework in which different methods can work together. Further, it is applied also in areas other than psychotherapy, such as counseling, education, prevention and management.

We look upon trans-cultural adaptation as a process of interaction (attachment, differentiation, detachment) leading to a balance between four different modes: body, contacts, achievement and future. The results showed that for the group whose expectations were in the achievement and contact area, the actual conflict (actual problem) was most often in the same area where the expectations were laying. For both groups (with expectations in achievement and contact area), the basic conflict and the self-deficits were in the fantasy/future area. For the group whose expectations were in the area of future, the actual conflict was split between the contact and body area, with self-deficits mainly in the contact area. The basic conflict of this group was in psychic adaptation, compensation and defense mechanisms. The short term therapy led to completely disappearing of the symptoms in 66.7% of the cases and dramatically diminishing in the rest of the cases.

By changing environment, migrating people do not solve the difficulties experienced with the interaction. The relationship between expectations and the problematic areas of interaction exist. Further, trans-cultural adaptation takes time. By keeping something from their own culture and taking something from the host culture the adaptation process goes more smoothly.

In **Chapter 7**, we shortly present and discuss the main findings, its limitations, and provide suggestions for future research. We do this by formulating and discussing six statements. The study implications are highlighted. The research on the organization level suggests that job lock is related to employee's personal characteristics as well as to on-work and off-work related factors. Further, it proves that the same factors that push an employee into job lock lead him/her to long-term job lock. Self-determination has a direct effect on job embeddedness components, while self-compassion influences job embeddedness via its effect on self-aspects. On a country level, low self-esteem proves to place the employee at risk to

Summary

become unemployed. And on trans-cultural level, trans-cultural adaptation shows to be a process of interactions.